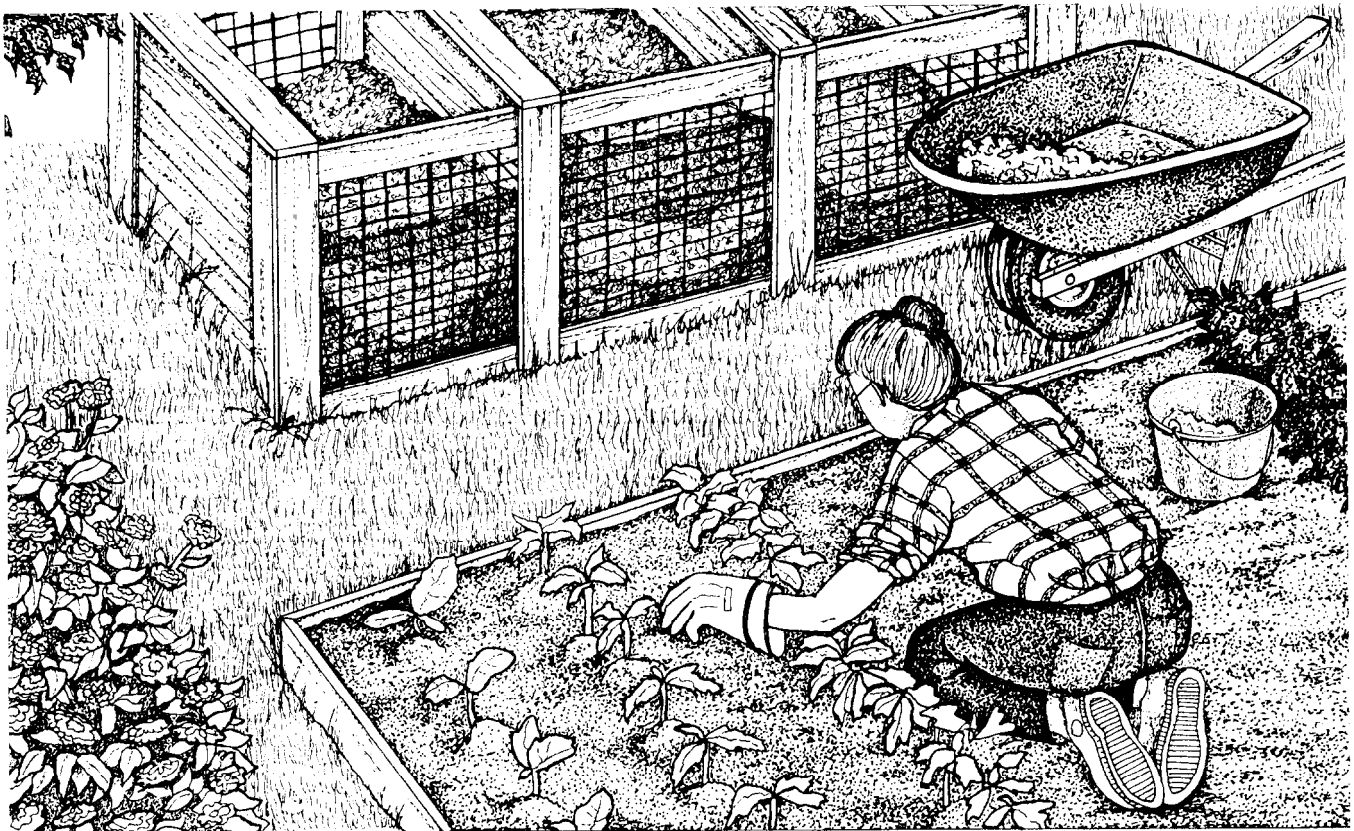


GARDEN WASTES



A Valuable Resource

Gardening creates waste (vegetable garden debris, leaves, twigs and branches, etc.) that can be converted by composting into a valuable resource.

The *Sound* Gardening approach to garden and yard wastes is to compost them and reuse the end product as a soil amender. Compost provides organic matter and valuable nutrients for some of your fertilizer needs.

Keep Garden Waste Out of the Sound

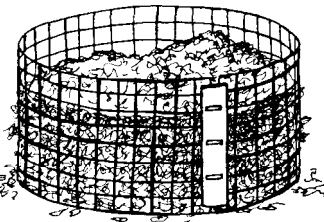
Dumping valuable and recyclable materials in Long Island Sound or a river, lake, stream, storm drain or recharge basin endangers the health of the water, plants and animals associated with the water systems, as well as our own fresh water supply.

Using Garden Wastes

Mulching

Yard waste such as leaves and wood chips can be used as a mulch. Adding mulch to your garden will conserve water, moderate soil temperature and reduce weed growth. Eventually, nutrients within the mulch will

be released and the decomposed organic matter will improve soil structure. Grass clippings **are** best left on the lawn to recycle their plant nutrients directly back into the growing grass. Improved recycling lawnmowers **are** now available to assist this process. Clippings do not contribute to thatch problems.



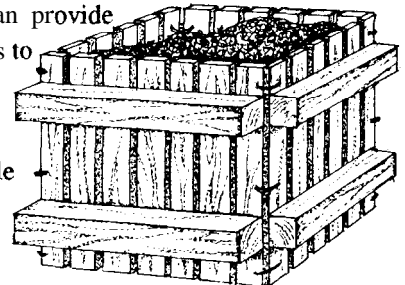
What Can Be Composted?

All organic materials are compostable. Large pieces (twigs, branches, stalks, etc.) should be chipped or shredded into smaller **pieces** to speed up the breakdown process. Shredding leaves is also a good idea; you could use a rotary mower.

Herbicide treated grass clippings, if collected, must be composted until completely decomposed (usually for at least a year) to eliminate potential secondary herbicide problems.

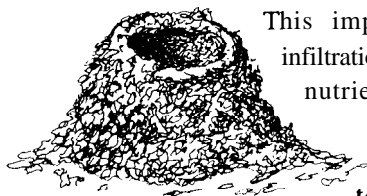
Diseased **plant** parts, as well as perennial weeds and weeds with seeds, should not be placed in a compost pile unless a large amount of organic matter is added at the same time. A large pile of properly managed decomposing biomass can **provide** high enough temperatures to kill many organisms.

A properly maintained compost pile will be odorless, pest and rodent free.

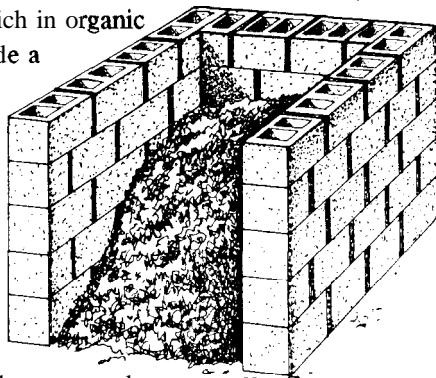


Composting

Compost, the end product of organic decomposition, can be used to improve the soil. Compost can loosen heavy clay soils by improving soil structure.



This improves aeration and water infiltration. In sandy soils, water and nutrient holding ability will be increased (one pound of organic matter can hold up to seven pounds of water). The organic matter and its microbial populations will increase the soil's ability to hold and **break down certain groups of** pesticides. Soils rich in **organic** matter also provide a favorable environment for many beneficial organisms such as insects, worms and microorganisms.



Partially decomposed compost can be **used as** a surface mulch to control weeds. However, when it is tilled into the soil prior to planting, it should be completely decomposed.

REMEMBER

- * Yard wastes are a valuable recyclable resource that can improve the immediate surroundings without damaging any part of the environment.
- * Using composted wastes to help improve soil will help with plant establishment and decrease soil erosion.

For more information on Sound **Gardening**, garden wastes and composting, contact your local Cooperative Extension office.

In Connecticut:

Storrs: (203)486-3435	Litchfield: (203)567-9447
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